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CONSIDERATIONS
ON
TAXES,

As they are supposed to affect

The PRICE of LABOUR.



Price One Shilling and Six-pence.



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CONSIDERATIONS

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As they are supposed to affect

The PRICE of LABOUR

IN OUR

MANUFACTURIES:

ALSO

Some REFLECTIONS on the general Behaviour and Disposition of the MANUFACTURING POPULACE of this Kingdom; shewing, by Arguments drawn from Experience, that nothing but *Necessity* will enforce Labour; and that no State ever did, or ever can, make any considerable Figure in Trade, where the Necessaries of Life are at a low Price.

In a LETTER to a FRIEND.

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. JOHNSON, opposite the Monument; and
Sold by W. NICOLL, in St. Paul's Church-yard.

MDCCLXV.

CONSIDERATIONS

ON

TAXES

As they are imposed on

The Price of Labour

IN OUR

MANUFACTURIES:

ALSO

Some Remarks on the general Behaviour and
Disposition of the Manufacturers towards
of the Kingdom; the views of Arguments drawn
from Experience, that nothing but a
free Labour; and that no State could, or ever
can, make any considerable figure in Trade, where
the Necessaries of Life are at a low price.

IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. Johnson, opposite the Monument; and
Sold by W. Mitchell, in St. Paul's Church-yard.

MDCCLXXV.



CONSIDERATIONS

ON

TAXES, &c.

In a LETTER to a FRIEND.

Dear Sir,

SOME time since, you proposed this question to me, viz. "Whether our taxes, and particularly those on the necessaries of life, had hitherto *so raised the price of labour in our manufactures, as to injure our foreign trade?*" To which I replied in the negative, and backed my opinion with arguments drawn from my own experience,

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and

and from the experience of other manufacturers, as well as from the observations of the most considerable writers on this subject. I find that you communicated my letter to a judicious friend of your's, who made some very ingenious objections to various parts of it: But these remarks of his, being founded in theoretic knowledge only, cannot be opposed to experience and fact with any prospect of success.

This sensible friend of your's has, doubtless, formed his judgment of those matters from *deceitful appearances*, from *fallacious reasonings*, and from *common prejudices*: But experience evinces that the conduct of the manufacturing populace of this kingdom, is a contradiction to all his arguments.

Agreeably to your request, I shall now repeat my own arguments, introduce your friend's objections to them as I go along,
and



and answer these objections as well as I am able.

I began with saying—*It appears to me that taxes on the necessaries of life have not hitherto been any disadvantage to the trade of this kingdom; but, on the contrary, that they tend to enforce general industry, to restrain idleness and debauchery, to improve our manufactures, and to make labour cheap a variety of ways.*

The very reverse of all this is, in general, believed to be the case; it being a received maxim, that *taxes on the necessaries of life raise the price of labour, render our manufactures dear, and lessen our foreign trade.*

From hence great clamours have been raised against taxes, especially by the enemies of *the* government; and many who take but a superficial view of things are easily led to believe, “ That our taxes will, one

“ day, prove the entire destruction of our
 “ foreign trade, and the ruin of the state”.
 Indeed I most readily agree, that whatever
 occasions the destruction of our foreign
 trade, will prove the ruin of the state; as
 without foreign commerce we cannot sup-
 port a navy capable of protecting us against
 our encroaching and ambitious neighbours,
 and much less be able to hold the ballance
 of *Europe*. If taxes are so fatal in their con-
 sequences as is here described, surely we
 should already have began, at least, to feel
 these unhappy effects of them; and the
Dutch, who are taxed three times as much
 as we are, must have lost all their foreign
 trade, and all their naval power, long ere
 now: whereas this is far from being the
 case either with us or them. Since we
 have had high taxes and excises, our ex-
 ports have greatly increased, and we have a
 naval force capable of protecting and of ex-
 tending our trade, much farther, if, as the
Dutch do, we make trade our principal
 2 object.

object. The *Dutch*, notwithstanding their high taxes, have been carrying on a very profitable trade ; and, though not as a state, individuals have been growing very rich, and commerce has brought great quantities of money among them, as will appear from the lowness of the interest of money in *Holland*: And they are now capable of making a very respectable figure at sea, if their rich merchants had patriotism enough to join heart and hand in the support of the state.

If this is a true state of the case, taxes have not, hitherto, apparently injured either us or the *Dutch*.

But it is asserted, “ That the necessaries
 “ which the manufacturing poor consume,
 “ being rendered dear by taxes, must in-
 “ evitably oblige them to raise the price of
 “ their labour; which will, of course, en-
 “ hance the price of our manufactures, and

“injure our foreign trade.” I wonder not that this opinion should prevail, as every one clearly sees, that if a populace can live cheap, they can *afford* to labour cheap; from whence it is immediately concluded that they will do so.

But those who have closely attended to the disposition and conduct of a manufacturing populace, have always found, that labouring *less*, and not *cheaper*, has been the consequence of a low price of provisions, and that when provisions are dear, from whatever cause, labour is always plenty, always well performed, and, of course, is always cheap. This is a paradox which nothing but experience could teach us to explain. In order to do this, let us observe, first, That mankind in general are naturally inclined to ease and indolence, and that nothing but absolute necessity will enforce labour and industry. Secondly, That the poor, in general, work only for the bare necessities of life,
and

and for the means of a low debauch, which when obtained they cease to labour, till roused again by necessity. Thirdly, That it is best for themselves, as well as for society, that the poor should be constantly employed.

This last article is of infinite consequence to a trading state, and therefore whatever tends to produce this desirable end, must be a general benefit. It is a maxim, I believe, never controverted, that the riches and strength of a state consist principally in the number of it's labouring people, provided they are properly employed; but an idle and unemployed populace will ever be a burden to a state. Any method therefore, that will enforce labour and industry, will have the same effect as increasing the number of hands, and will convert what would otherwise be a burden, into the riches and strength of the kingdom.

To the first and second of these propositions your friend replies: "What is said
 " of the poor working only from necessity,
 " is far from being the case here; and takes
 " place only in nations sunk in debauchery,
 " or where an arbitrary oppression robs them
 " of what they earn. In countries where
 " sober industry prevails, there is not a
 " a young man or woman, but soon have
 " a view to marriage, and to the means of
 " procuring what may render that state easy
 " and happy."

I wish, from my heart, that this gentleman could point out any state or country, where the labouring people are more idle and debauched than they are in this. I wish he could prove that in this country sober industry prevails, and that young men and women have soon a view to marriage, and to the means of procuring what would render that state easy and happy. This is a situation that every trading state would

would wish to be in: But I am sorry to say, that experience proves it to be the very reverse in this kingdom, as I shall shew farther by and by.

To my *third* observation, this gentleman agrees, and very judiciously points out *marriage*, among the poorer sort especially, as the most probable means of attaining this desirable end.

“ It is certainly best,” says he, “ for the
 “ state, and for themselves, that the poor
 “ should be constantly employed. *Marriage*
 “ is the means of bringing this about; be-
 “ cause the necessity of providing for a fa-
 “ mily stimulates industry, and when this
 “ is become a habit, the ease and conveni-
 “ ence which they find in consequence of
 “ it, will naturally tend to improve and
 “ establish it.”

Doubtless

Doubtless, every incitement to matrimony should be thrown out in a trading state, and married persons, especially those among the poor who have families, should be distinguished with honour, and be assisted by the state in proportion to the number of their children. Celibacy should be taxed, and the produce of the tax should be appropriated to the assistance and support of married persons, in proportion to their number of children. The single man, who pays but few taxes, should be taxed himself.

A trading state, as I said above, cannot be too full of labouring people, while the produce of the land cultivated in the best manner is sufficient to support them, or an extended commerce procures necessaries from other states, in exchange for her manufactures. By our foreign trade, and by our naval force to protect that trade, our manufactures are diffused throughout the world. A multitude of people being drawn
together

together in a small territory will raise the price of provisions; but at the same time, if the police be good, it will keep down the price of labour, it will make men industrious, and incline them to exert their best abilities in the improvement of our manufactures. Wherever there is a scarcity of hands, labour must be dear of course, and dearest when provisions are so cheap that those few are not obliged to labour above half their time for a maintenance. A more expeditious method of increasing the number of people, and of thereby keeping down the price of labour, and of enforcing industry, is a general naturalization. Nothing surely could have a better effect in a state where manufacturing hands are wanted, where quantities of land lie uncultivated, or where labour is scarce and dear from the idleness and debauchery of the manufacturing populace. There is no doubt but that, if our manufactures are good and cheap, they will meet ready sale in foreign markets, and that
the

the demand will increase, and the multitude find employment. By this, we should not only improve our own manufactures, but introduce the manufactories of foreigners with all their arts and improvements. A spirit of industry would be created by it; which, besides unanimity among our governors in the protection and extension of our trade, is all we seem to want to make us the greatest people in the world.

My letter went on thus: "Those who are concerned in the manufactories of this kingdom, know, by experience, that the poor do not labour, upon an average, above four days in a week, unless provisions happen to be very dear. When this is the case, a general industry is immediately created, the poor croud about the houses of master manufacturers, begging for work almost at any rate:—The quantity of labour then offered tends to lower it's price, and the populace work five or six days in a week instead

instead of three or four, because they cannot live by working less. The very reverse of this happens when wheat and other provisions are at a low price. Tippling-houses and skittle-grounds are then crowded, instead of their master's court yard; idleness and debauchery generally take place; labour grows scarce, and masters are obliged to seek it, and court the labourer to his work. Experience evinces that this is the true, though melancholy state of the case; and from hence it appears, that the poor might live comfortably by working six days in the week, even though necessities were taxed double to what they are at present".

To this part of my letter your friend replies as follows, *viz.* " Those who view
 " manufactures with a superficial eye, are
 " apt to draw this conclusion; but a tho-
 " rough inquiry will teach them, that the
 " standard of wages is naturally fixed at the
 " medium

“ medium price of provisions. There is
 “ a relation between these, which gradually
 “ and constantly takes place; else why the
 “ present wages of one shilling a day in-
 “ stead of one penny, which was the case
 “ some centuries ago. Labour and wages
 “ must bear such relation to one another,
 “ in all wise nations, that the wages shall
 “ be sufficient to render the married state
 “ so easy as to encourage the young of both
 “ sexes to obey that first and great com-
 “ mand, Increase and multiply. If the
 “ idle batchelor wastes his time, let punish-
 “ ment and disgrace induce him to marry.”

Your humane and judicious friend will
 certainly excuse an involuntary smile on
 my reading the beginning of this last
 paragraph. The eye of the *theorist* is the
 superficial eye: It is the eye of experience
 that has established my opinion; not only
 my own experience, but the experience
 of every manufacturer whom I have con-
 versed

versed with upon the subject. They all agree, that cheapness of provisions is very injurious to the manufacturing part of this kingdom, and that it tends to make labour dear a variety of ways.

The nominal price of a day's labour in money hardly ever varies with the price of provisions. Though, from a bad harvest, wheat should advance two shillings a bushel, which would affect the poor much more than all the taxes put together; yet the price of a day's labour would remain the same. This has been known by experience; and the industrious poor have still lived comfortably. Those, indeed, who have been accustomed in a cheap time to idle away two or three days in a week, then complain of starving; but, if examined into, it will be found that they have no real complaint to make, except that of being obliged to work six days in a week for a maintenance. But though the price of labour

is not immediately affected by the price of provisions, in settled and established manufactories ; yet every master manufacturer well knows that there are various other ways of raising the price of labour, much more fatal than that of paying more money for it. Labour being performed in a worse manner for the same wages, is the most fatal way of raising its price ; for this is beyond all calculation, and tends to the total loss of that branch of trade to the state.*

Advancing money to a labourer before he has earned it, in order to keep him in your service on any sudden demand for manufactures, is another way of raising the price of labour, though its nominal value continues the same ; for this advanced money is very often lost, nay, I have been informed

* To this may be added, a waste of the raw materials, which must be winked at. The cheaper provisions are, the more this waste will prevail ; the dearer, less.

that,

that, in the crape manufactory at *Norwich*, some masters have lost from fifty to eighty pounds a year in this way. But the nominal price of labour by the day, by the piece, by the yard, and by the pound weight, will sometimes be advanced ; but this depends on a sudden great demand for the commodity, upon the villainous combinations of workmen, and not upon the high price of provisions : on the contrary, this very seldom happens when provisions are at a high price. The disposition of the manufacturing poor are so very depraved and wicked, that I have known a number of them *play* for two days together, when they have been informed that their master had received a large foreign commission, in order to make themselves necessary to him, to have advanced money offered them, and to be courted to their work : But this never happens when provisions are dear : labour is then too plenty, and becomes too necessary to admit of any such unnatural combinations. But farther,

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when provisions are at a high price, labour is performed with care, with assiduity, and with a regard to the pleasing their employer; and manufactures are improved from an exertion of skill, and an honest emulation in workmen to excel one another. Again, persons who are obliged, by an high price of necessaries, to labour six days in the week for support, keep themselves sober; and the work of such men is always best performed. It is difficult, after a few days debauch, for a man to return to his labour: When he does, it is with distaste and reluctance; often with an aching head and trembling hands, which render him incapable of performing his work in a proper manner; and it is well known that the first day's work of a journeyman after a few days of idleness and debauchery in a cheap time, is performed, beyond all calculation, worse than that of a man who has habituated himself to sobriety and constant labour. Sir *William Temple* observes that, "Of such
I force

force is the prevalency of habit, that the change from constant labour to constant ease, is as difficult, and disagreeable, as from constant ease to constant labour ;” and from hence I think I may venture to assert, that it would be better for the labourer, as well as for the state, that he should labour six days for six shillings, than that he should receive the same sum for labouring only four days, or in that proportion. In other words, it would be better for the labourer, as well as for the state, that provision and other necessities should be so dear as to enforce the labour of six days for a maintenance, instead of four. Both the man and his family would be made infinitely the happier by it; an habit of sobriety and industry would be hereby acquired and confirmed, and the man would naturally, and almost insensibly, become a better husband, a better father, a better member of society. In short, the social virtues, as well as thoughts of God and religion, would, very probably, find

place in the hearts of many, who have now no idea of either. Of what infinite consequence then is it, especially to a trading state, that some method should be found out to enforce labour, and procure habits of sobriety and industry among the manufacturing populace.

Your friend goes on to say; " If the
 " price of provisions was rendered dear by
 " taxes, or, which is nearly the same, if there
 " was a constant dearth, the labourers would
 " certainly fly to any place where they
 " could live more at their ease, unless their
 " country was of too narrow a limit to afford
 " this option. Even in this case they
 " might be tempted to prefer foreign and
 " cheaper countries." To which I reply;
 Men can no where be so certain of a support at all times, as in countries where commerce is established and holds it's seat, notwithstanding that provisions may be dear, from a great number of people being croud-

ed together in a small territory. In such places, labour is always to be found, the industrious may always live comfortably, and the riches of such a state will always enable it to support those, who by age, sickness, or accident, are incapable of labour. A famine was never known to prevail in a country enriched by commerce, though ever so full of people; whilst in countries where the support of the inhabitants depends on agriculture alone, where there are but few manufactories, few people, and little or no exportation, terrible famines have frequently happened. Such has formerly been our case here in England, before commerce enriched us; as we are informed by *Stow* and *Bishop Fleetwood*. The judicious author of the *Vindication of Commerce and the Arts* tells us, in p. 44 of that work, " That it is the greater certainty and ease of procuring sustenance which makes people leave the mountains of *Scotland* and *Switzerland*, and the woods of *Germany*, to settle at *Lon-*

don, Amsterdam, and Hamburgh." Provisions are not cheaper in the last mentioned places: but there is always certain employment, and a comfortable living for the industrious. This then must be their inducement.

I did not set out with an attempt to prove, that high taxes are, in general, a benefit to a state; but only, that those which the exigencies of this state have rendered necessary, have not, hitherto, raised the price of labour in our manufactories, rendered manufactures dear, and lessened our foreign trade. This indeed proves itself from the increase of our exports since the revolution. What I have attempted, and shall farther attempt to prove, appears still more difficult, *viz.* That taxes on the necessaries which the poor principally consume, tend to enforce general industry, and keep down the price of labour in our manufactories: nay, I hope I have proved, by arguments drawn from experience, that an high price of necessaries
never

never does raise the price of labour, but the contrary ; and I think I may venture to assert, that if all the taxes that affect the consumption of the poor were at once to be abolished, and if their necessaries were reduced in price 100 *per cent.* the price of labour would be greatly raised, and our foreign trade would be lost in a short time ; for the poor would not furnish manufactures enough for our home consumption. Whether wheat is at eight shillings a bushel, or at five ; the price of a day's labour remains just the same, and such consequences only arise as have been mentioned above.

It is the very same with the *Dutch*, and, I suppose, in every other trading state. A love of ease and indolence is not peculiar to any particular country, but is what all mankind are inclined to.

If I am rightly informed, a *Dutch* manufacturer pays near one third of what he

earns, in taxes; an *English* manufacturer not above one tenth, and from necessity not above one 36th part of the produce of his labour. Such bread as our people eat, is sold in *Holland* at three-pence a pound, and flesh at nine-pence; yet a day's labour is not above one shilling and two-pence sterling. Labour then is much cheaper in *Holland* than in *England*, and from hence the frugality and industry of the poor is much greater: yet the people do not fly to places where provisions are cheaper: on the contrary, the state is full of people, and the lands fully cultivated; the poor are constantly employed, necessity obliges them to labour all the week, nay, many of them labour on Sundays also; and labour, by habit, becomes agreeable and entertaining to them. Idleness, the parent of almost every vice, is banished the state, and honesty, industry, and sobriety take her place. One proof of this is, "That in the great city of *Amsterdam*, not above four malefactors are capitally convicted

convicted in a year ;” and a beggar is hardly to be seen in the streets. Happy consequences these of the low price of labour, or, which is the same, of the high price of necessaries. However, I must observe that the police of the *Dutch* must also be very good, and that their laws in particular relative to the poor, must be wisely calculated and duly enforced. Is it not amazing, my friend, that this example of the *Dutch* should not rouse our legislators, and incline them to exert their abilities in framing a good set of poor laws, and enforcing their execution: A set of laws which would extirpate idleness, restrain debauchery, prevent vagrancy, assist honest industry, employ the poor, and ease the lands of the heavy burden of poor rates? What can be more worthy the attention of the legislature, than the framing of laws which would tend to make six or seven millions of labouring people sober, industrious, frugal, temperate, virtuous and happy; especially as

a consequence of this would be an extension of our commerce, an increase of our people, of our riches, of our strength, and of our glory? Whilst our governors are nobly and usefully employed in settling the boundaries of our conquests abroad, and securing them against the encroachments of ambitious neighbours; I hope they will not forget that the setting of bounds to idleness and debauchery, and the preventing of the encroachments of vice among six or seven millions of our people at home, is an object not unworthy their highest concern and closest attention.

Taxes on the necessaries of life, which have occasioned so much clamour, do in some measure operate towards the enforcing of labour and industry; but not so forcibly as to extirpate idleness and debauchery. A good set of poor laws is therefore very much wanted in this kingdom.

Taxes

Taxes on the necessaries of the poor, which are said to be of such fatal consequence to our foreign trade, are known, by experience, to be of all taxes the least injurious to the trade of a state, and should be the last to be abolished: Nay, a very ingenious author *, who has applied closely to the study of these things, and to whom I am obliged for many remarks in this letter, hath proposed, “ That a tax might be laid
 “ on wheat (as it is in *Holland*) when at a
 “ low price, and that a fund should be
 “ formed out of it’s produce, from which
 “ a certain sum per head should be paid to
 “ the poor in times of sickness, dearth, want
 “ of work, or any other distress. Upon the
 “ footing of this scheme,” he says, “the more
 “ a man spent, the more he would pay; and
 “ the more children he got, the more he
 “ would receive back in times of calamity.”
 Whatever theorists may say or think about

* See *Vindication of Commerce and the Arts*, p. 30.
 it,

it, how much soever people may clamour about the taxes on necessaries; experience proves, that an high price of labour, or a low price of necessaries, which is the same thing (for whenever a man can purchase all his necessaries with a little labour, or by labouring but part of his time, which is the case in this kingdom, then labour may, with great propriety, be said to be dear)—I say, experience proves, that whenever this is the case, idleness and debauchery will be the consequence. Nay, this is so natural a consequence, that I believe a state cannot be named, in which sober industry has prevailed, whilst the necessaries of life could be procured with little labour. It amounts to a moral contradiction.

Thus I hope I have proved, by arguments drawn from experience, that taxes on necessaries have not hitherto injured our trade; nay, that they have, on the contrary, a tendency to improve and extend it; to which

which I may possibly add some others before I conclude this letter.

To confirm what I have here advanced, I shall now produce the authorities of men who have made these things their study, and the experience of states.

Sir *William Temple*, in his discourse to the Lord Lieutenant of *Ireland*, says, “ In order
“ to advance the trade of *Ireland*, provisions
“ must be rendered so dear as to enforce
“ general industry.”—Sir *William Petty*, Sir *Josiah Child*, Mr. *Polixfen*, Mr. *Gee*, and others, have all concurred in the same observation, *viz.* that trade can never be greatly extended, where the necessaries of life are very cheap. An author whom I have often quoted, in page 69 of his *Vindication of Commerce and the Arts* says, “ The reason
“ why commerce seldom flourishes in a fertile
“ country thinly peopled, is because land
“ being there of small value, from the scar-
“ city

“ city of inhabitants, provisions are cheap
 “ and plentiful, and labour dear.” The ce-
 lebrated Doctor *Franklin*, in his *Observations*
concerning the Increase of Mankind, &c. af-
 ter speaking of the vast increase of people in
 North *America*, says, “ But notwithstand-
 “ ing this increase, so vast is the territory,
 “ that it will require many ages to settle it
 “ fully; and till it is fully settled, labour
 “ will never be cheap there, where no man
 “ continues long a labourer for others, but
 “ gets a plantation of his own; no man
 “ continues long a journeyman to a trade,
 “ but goes among those new settlers and
 “ sets up for himself, &c”. Many other
 very good reasons has this author given why
 labour cannot be cheap enough in North
America, to establish manufactures there.
 The great *De Witt*, if I remember right, in
 his maxims of *Holland*, says, that “ high
 taxes promote invention, industry and fru-
 gality”. Mr. *Locke* said, in his time, that
 the frugality and industry of the *Dutch* was
 so

so great, from the high price of provisions, that they would buy our rape-seed, make it into oil, and sell it cheaper than we do. And it is remarked that, about the time of *Edward* the Third, the *Flemings* bought our wool, paid high custom *out*, manufactured it, and paid custom *in*, and yet sold cheaper than the natives. Such are the advantages of industry and frugality. But farther to confirm what I have here advanced, let me add, that all the states in the world who have made any considerable figure in trade, have been such as have possessed little land, and where the necessaries of life have been dear from the multitude of people and smallness of territory; such as *Tyre*, *Sidon*, *Carthage*, *Athens*, *Rhodes*, *Syracuse*, *Agrigentum*, *Marseilles*, *Venice*, *Holland*, *England*, and the *Hans Towns*.

To these observations your friend replies, and says; " If we trace commerce from
 " the earliest times, we shall find, that it
 " followed

“ followed plenty and protection, and that
 “ as either of these failed, it accordingly
 “ shifted its abode.”

If this gentleman had said that commerce and protection draw men together in a state, I should readily have subscribed to his opinion. Commerce must first be established by the people belonging to a state; and then, by good laws, protection of property, and certainty of employment, men are allured from other states where they want these: Provisions then grow dear, and labour grows relatively *cheap*, manufactures are improved, foreign trade is extended, and the state becomes rich and populous. The want of employment in their own country, and the certainty of finding it in another, is the greatest inducement men have for quitting their homes. Wherever there is employment, there will certainly be provisions; because, in such places, the lands will always be well cultivated, as is the case
 in

in *Holland*, which is allowed to be the best cultivated and most populous country in the world, in proportion to it's extent of territory. In a state enriched by commerce, the number of people may greatly exceed the produce of the land. Excessive dearth or famine can never happen in such a state. Though their own crops should fail, they have abundant means of supplying themselves from other states. Other nations are glad to exchange their superfluous provisions for the manufactures of these. Neither want of provisions nor want of employment can well happen in a state where commerce and the arts are established. *Holland* is a remarkable instance of this: It's freedom, it's good government, and it's commerce, have rendered it so populous, that it's lands, tho' cultivated to the highest perfection, are not able to support the inhabitants. Provisions are, from hence, and from high taxes, very dear in *Holland*; but want can never

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be

be known there, nor is it's trade at all injured by the high price of provisions.

It is not merely in search of plenty that men leave their native country; it is more generally in search of employment. Take the words of the judicious author before quoted *. “ Commerce supported by an
 “ equitable government, an equal taxation,
 “ a general toleration in religion, and a full
 “ security of person and property, these al-
 “ lure people, and *Naturalization*, with
 “ open arms receives them. When a state
 “ presents these blessings, the industrious,
 “ the indigent, the distressed and persecuted
 “ fly to her for relief. They do not ask
 “ whether laughing *Ceres* pours her bounties
 “ over the fertile plains, or *Flora* decks the
 “ enamelled meads; but whether they can
 “ be assured of the enjoyment of the ad-
 “ vantages specified above. If so, thither
 “ people will flock, and soon convert the

* See *Vindication of Commerce, &c.*

“ standing pool and lake into fat meadows,
 “ cover the barren rock with verdure, and
 “ make the desert smile with flowers.”

Surely persons would never go to *Holland* in search of cheap provisions, for every one knows that they are very dear there: Yet *Holland*, as hath been said above, is the most populous state in *Europe*, in proportion to its extent of territory. If the price of labour was to rise in proportion to the price of necessaries, it would destroy itself. *Holland*, in this case, would soon be underfold in foreign markets, and so lose all its commerce. But the fact is not true: for though a great number of people, in a small territory, will certainly raise the price of provisions; it will also as certainly keep down the price of labour, and promote sobriety and industry, provided there be a good police. This is certainly a good argument for a general naturalization, which, of all other expedients, will operate more powerfully and more speedily than any other to-

wards rendering the state populous, rich, and powerful. It's manufactures would be improved, it's commerce extended, and it's lands would be cultivated by this means, to the highest degree of perfection. It is ridiculous to assert, as some have done, "That a general Naturalization would produce so great an influx of people as to render provisions so scarce and dear that numbers would be starved by it," Provisions might be rendered dear by a great increase of people; but it is morally impossible that a famine should happen, or that the poor should be starved in a state enriched by extensive commerce. It would be a long time before provisions would be as dear among us as they are in *Holland*, with the addition of their heavy taxes. We have large tracts of land yet uncultivated, and also much land not cultivated to it's highest perfection. Such improvement would employ a great number of hands, and produce great quantities of provisions.

But farther : I can by no means admit that the number of people in a state is limited by the produce of the lands, provided the state is enriched by extensive commerce. The contrary of this is proved by the states of *Holland*, where the produce of the lands, though they are cultivated at a great expence, and to the highest perfection, will not support the inhabitants, and provisions are imported from other states in exchange for their manufactures. In such case, *England* would readily be supplied from her colonies; and if, after all, we should grow to be too full of people, we have room enough in our colonies for the surplus : and thus it appears that *England* could not suffer from a general naturalization, but on the contrary, that all ranks and degrees of men must be benefited thereby. The gentry, the clergy, and the farmer, would be benefited by the improvement of the lands. Manufactures would be improved and rendered cheaper, which of course would in-

crease our foreign trade, and thereby enrich the manufacturer, the broker, the merchant, and the state. Employment would be created for every mechanical art. Invention would be prompted, industry enforced, and sobriety and œconomy would naturally follow. The idle and debauched, who now labour but four days in a week and riot the other two, might indeed complain; but of what? why, that by admitting people, more industrious than themselves, they should be obliged to labour six days in a week and to live temperate and sober. The goodness of our laws would not only bring art and industry amongst us, but many would willingly come and bring great riches with them, if, by a general naturalization, our arms were opened to receive them. But our politics, in this particular, are different from many other states. I wish we may become wiser, in this respect,

Upon

Upon the same mistaken principles, our national debt has for many years back been thought to be the source of inevitable ruin to this state. It has been thought, that a debt of thirty millions would raise the price of labour so high in our manufactories, as to ruin our foreign trade. The state became thirty millions in debt, and our exports increased. But not to enumerate all the prophecies of politicians in the different stages of our national debt; it has of late years been very confidently asserted, that *one hundred millions* would produce a weight of taxes, which would entirely crush our foreign trade and bankrupt the nation. These gentlemen have also been proved to be false prophets; for with a debt of an hundred and thirty millions we yet preserve our trade, our credit, our influence, our power and our glory; or if we do not, some other cause may be assigned besides the *national debt*. The debt of *Holland* is much greater than ours, in proportion, and the taxes are three

times as high : yet, is her trade ruined ? so far from it, *Holland* is now the richest and most populous country in *Europe*, and the center of all it's exchanges. Her merchants are very rich, and the weight of taxes makes her poor very industrious, very frugal, and very sober, by which means they become our rivals in trade. If any heavy state debt could have ruined the *Dutch*, they would have been ruined an hundred years ago. Upon the whole, I hope it appears that taxes carry not that *ruin* with them, which superficial observers imagine : Nay, I hope I have proved that taxes, considered only as raising the price of necessaries, are rather a benefit than an injury to a trading state ; unless carried to an enormous length, far beyond what our's are at present.

I think I have proved this by arguments drawn from experience, and by the opinions of the ablest writers on these subjects. But I will yet farther consider your friend's
grand

grand objection, viz. " That there is a relation between the price of labour and the price of provisions, and that, in all wise nations, this relation will be considered in such manner, that the wages shall be sufficient to render the marriage state easy to the poor."

I agree with this judicious gentleman, that if the price of labour was to be fixed by law, the relation between the price of provisions and the price of labour must be the basis of that law : But this is not so easily done as may be imagined. In such case, the state would have several other things to consider. First, it will be extremely difficult to determine what price labour should be at, in relation to any given price of provisions, in order to procure that ease for poor married people, which your humane friend contends for, as it would depend on a variety of circumstances. An *industrious* man, with a family, would live comfortably,

comfortably, though necessities were much dearer than they are at present: This is the case in *Holland*. An idle and debauched man would be constantly poor, though single, notwithstanding necessities were at half their present price: This has been, and I fear ever will be, the case in *England*, unless necessity enforces labour, till it becomes habitual. Secondly, a state would have to consider, how many days in a week a man ought to labour, in order to *procure a decent maintenance for himself and family**. In such case, I should suppose the state

* 1st. The necessities of a family is a vague term. 2dly. A family is vague; it may be four or ten persons. 3dly. A day's work is vague; it may be six hours or sixteen. 4thly The quantity of labour in a state is uncertain. 5thly. The seasons and weather are various as to heat and cold, which must vary the price of labour. 6thly. The value of money is different, so that in one country an ounce of silver will purchase a sack of wheat, and twenty days labour; in another, but a bushel, and five days labour: What a perplexity arises hence! But when the price of labour

state would fix on six days labour, having a kind of direction in this particular from God himself in the fourth commandment. There are, however, many other things to be considered, which render the fixing the price of labour impracticable. By labouring six days in the week there are some few who now save money, even though they have several children. I own that such sobriety and industry very seldom appear among us: Yet I am credibly informed of one manufacturing journeyman, who, from no other advantage than what all in general have who are employed in the same manufactory, has saved, in about twenty years, near five hundred pounds, and always lived more decently than those who have spent all they have earned. *One* instance of this kind is sufficient to shew what the force of industry and sobriety will accomplish. Was the price of labour to be fixed by law, every hour is talked of, and compared between two states, &c. all these ought to be considered,

wise

wise state would consider what an *industrious* man could do, and not the common practice of the idle and debauched.

It has been a maxim, though a false one,
 “ That no sooner are necessaries cheap, but
 “ labour is so likewise. The very reverse
 of this appears from experience to be true.
 But here it will be necessary to make an
 observation upon the relative terms *dear* and
cheap, which I shall do in the words of the
 author of *The Vindication of Commerce and the
 Arts*. “ When a man (says he) can purchase
 “ all his necessaries with a little labour,
 “ we say they are *cheap*: when it requires a
 “ great deal of labour to purchase or pro-
 “ vide them, we say they are *dear*. Now
 “ if we look back to our histories of antient
 “ times, when wheat was in common
 “ about two shillings a quarter; we find la-
 “ bour so high, that two days work would
 “ purchase a bushel of wheat in common.
 “ When wheat is at ten shillings a bushel,
 “ labour

“ labour is no dearer in *England*, than when
 “ it is at two shillings and six-pence.”

This, if true, as I believe it is, entirely destroys your friend's argument. But to illustrate this, we will, for argument's sake, put all the necessaries of the poor under one denomination, for instance, call them all wheat, and suppose that a man, in order to support himself, must earn a bushel of wheat in a week, that the bushel of wheat shall cost five shillings, and that he receives a shilling a day for his labour : He then would be obliged to work only five days. Now let us suppose that a plentiful harvest reduces the price of a bushel of wheat to four shillings, the man in such case would be obliged to work but four days, and nineteen out of twenty of our manufacturing poor would work no more than four days. But as wages, in this kingdom, are much higher in proportion to the price of necessaries than is here supposed; the man who
 labours

labours five days in a week, in almost any of our manufactories, has a surplus to debauch with on the sixth, and the man who labours but four days will idle and debauch on the other two. But let us shift the scene, and suppose that a bad harvest should raise the price of wheat to six shillings a bushel; the only consequence is, that the man is obliged to work six days for his support: but, as I observed above, as the price of labour is much higher than the proportion here laid down; the industrious man, by working six days, might not only support himself and family, but lay up money.

To labour six days in the week, as hinted above, cannot surely be thought unreasonable, if we credit the law of *Moses*; and this command will be, some how or other, enforced by every commercial state that desires to grow rich and powerful by the extension of it's foreign trade, and that would willingly procure a habit of sobriety and industry

dustry among it's labouring people. This, with a tolerable oeconomy, would answer all your friend's humane designs, and render the marriage state easy to the labouring poor, even though necessaries were dearer than they are at present. The *Dutch* do this, and more: why may not we do the same? The *Dutch* are higher taxed, their wheat and other provisions are always dearer, yet they have few vagrants, and very few criminals.

How easily may we perceive, from this state of the case, that it is best for the man and for the state that provisions should be so dear, or wages so low, as to enforce six days labour? How easy is it to perceive, that when provisions are cheap, labour must be dear, and so on the contrary? In short, how easy is it to perceive that *nothing but necessity will enforce labour among the generality of labouring people?*

Every

Every wise, commercial state, which has a power to extend it's commerce, will consider the vast advantage that one day's labour in a week would amount to, and endeavour, by a good set of poor's laws, to enforce it. In all our manufactures together, it is judged that it would produce the value of near twelve millions of commodities *per annum* : an object well worth the serious consideration of the legislature.

It may be objected by some tender heart-ed people, that the *industrious* man would suffer if the *idle* were obliged to labour more, from the high price of necessaries. But this would not be the case, for general industry would produce commodities in proportion, and a plenty of all things; and consumption would create employment, which would greatly avail the industrious man and his family. However, supposing the above to be the case; in such a world as this is, it is impossible but that the good and virtuous
must

must sometimes suffer from the vices of others. It is the lot of human nature : and in all such cases, the benefit of a few individuals, and a few indeed they would be in this particular instance, must always be given up to produce the good of the community, when incompatible with it. Besides, if labour is permitted to continue too dear in our manufactures, we shall be underfold by other states, and lose our trade: How would the poor then subsist? Having no employment, they must starve. Can it be cruel then to enforce labour and industry, in order to prevent such fatal consequences? Is it ever thought cruel for one man, even forcibly, to prevent another's ruining, or destroying himself? It is much the case here.

But this evil is not so great as may be imagined ; for first, there are very few industrious poor (comparatively speaking) in the kingdom, particularly in our manufactories ; and secondly, it has been shewn

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above,

above, that the industrious may save money when provisions are at an high price. Nay, one instance has been produced where a labouring family, in about twenty years, laid up near five hundred pounds. Now suppose this family, with a few others, in the same circumstances, had saved but three hundred pounds each; would this injury to them be any argument against the very extensive good which an enforced general industry would produce to the state? Surely it would not.

It may be farther objected, that we might not find vent for such an increase of manufacture as a general industry would produce. To this I reply, that the poor, if they laboured more, would or might consume more: to which I add the words of the judicious Doctor *Franklin*, viz. “ That the
 “ people in our *American* colonies increase
 “ so fast, that in a little time they would
 4 “ take

“ take off every thing we could make,
 “ which suited their consumption.”

Thus, Sir, I hope I have answered all your friend's objections relative to taxes as affecting the price of labour and our foreign trade: Yet I cannot conclude so interesting a subject without adding a few more thoughts on that head.

Excises and customs, nay all taxes, are dangerous to liberty, because they may, possibly, be extended beyond due bounds. On this account all manner of sophistry has been made use of to render them odious, and to prove them disadvantageous to our trade, though it is demonstrable that if judiciously laid, they are of great advantage to both foreign and domestick trade. I lately brought an intelligent merchant, who was a great enemy to taxes, to acknowledge this to be true, and that the taking them off would ruin the trade of the kingdom:

dom: But to see these consequences, a man must be intelligent, unprejudiced, void of pride, and an unbiaſſed ſearcher after truth ; qualities which few are poſſeſſed of. Indeed the ſubject is exceedingly perplexed, and entangled with a ſurpriſing multitude of relations; and likewise depends on facts which few are acquainted with.

What might have been true formerly, may be falſe now, from alterations in the ſtate of both trade and agriculture. In ſhort, few people can be convinced that high taxes do not injure our foreign trade, by raiſing the price of labour in manufactures: but I hope I have ſhewn the contrary, and that the utter abolishing of taxes would be a manifeſt injury to trade. But for once let us ſuppoſe that our preſent taxes, or an increaſe of them, ſhould raiſe the price of neceſſaries two-pence a day for the poor; the utmoſt evil that could ariſe from thence, ſuppoſing there was ſufficient employment, would

would be, that the poor would be obliged to work one hour a day more for their subsistence, nay, for the same means of a low debauch, which they now indulge in; for by working this one hour extraordinary, they would be capable of purchasing as many necessaries and superfluities as they could do if no such taxes were laid on. Is this an evil so greatly to be dreaded, or deserving of the noise and clamour it has raised in this kingdom? Surely no.

When it is considered what luxuries the poor manufacturers consume, such as brandy, gin, tea, sugar, tobacco, foreign fruit, strong beer, printed linnens, snuff, &c. &c. it is amazing that any one should be so weak as to conceive, that taxes should raise the price of labour, or that it should be necessary to raise the price of labour under our taxes, in order to enable the poor to live comfortably, when they consume such heaps of superfluities.

I am informed that in one little town of three thousand inhabitants, mostly manufacturers, they pay excise for two thousand hogsheads of strong beer, besides what is spent in spiritous liquors, &c. all proof of exorbitant wages, and that taxes have not, necessarily, raised the price of our manufactures. But the worst consequence is that high wages produce sloth. If a desire of luxuries produced industry, it might be useful, create trade, and improve the lands. Hence all might consume more, and bear with equal facility higher taxes: But an hour in a day lost in labour is a prodigious injury to a commercial state.

In short, taxes are so far from injuring our foreign trade, by rendering our manufactures dear at the markets abroad, that I am persuaded we should have no manufactures to export, if taxes were entirely abolished, and if, from other concurrent causes, our manufacturing poor could, in general,
live

live at half the expence they have done for twenty years past.

Nothing can be a stronger proof that it is not our taxes which enable our potent enemies and dangerous rivals, the *French*, to undersell us, than this fact, *viz.* that if all our taxes were abolished, the *French* would still be able to undersell us. This is owing principally to the high value of their money, and the low value of ours.

As few people know any thing of the force of this reasoning, and some pretend they cannot comprehend it; I will endeavour to explain it in such manner that every one of a tolerable capacity may understand it's force.

The *French*, since the year 1613, have, by frequent enhancements of their money, varied the relation between silver and commodities, that is, they have altered the mea-

sure of value; by which means they do not give half so much silver for a day's labour as they did an hundred and fifty years ago. At that time they coined about eighteen livres out of eight ounces Troy-weight of fine silver; and now they coin near fifty-four livres out of the same quantity: And yet they now give no more *sous* for a day's labour, than they did before such enhancement of their money. Hence it is manifest, that, from this circumstance only, their labour is fallen two thirds, whilst our silver money has remained the same; and hence our labour has received no diminution that way. This circumstance, added to their living cheaper, will clearly account for the loss of our trade to *Italy*, *Turky*, and *Spain* in particular, where the *French* are our potent rivals, not only from the causes hinted at above, but owing partly to the infamous treaty of *Utrecht*, which left *Spain* in the hands of a Prince of the house of *Bourbon*.

From these causes, as well as from the sloth and luxury of our manufacturing populace, I greatly fear that the *French* will always be able to undersell us, notwithstanding their taxes are much more burdensome than ours, unless some method be found out to enforce labour and industry, and to procure to us some advantages of the like kind with theirs.

Be this as it may, I hope I have made it appear that our taxes are not the source of the evils so loudly complained of, and that our foreign trade has not been injured by them.

I hope I have also made it appear, that nothing but necessity will enforce general industry, and that a low price of necessaries would be a manifest injury to the trade of the state.

If *necessity* will not make people labour,
surely nothing will. People, in general,
do

do not labour, but to relieve their natural wants. To suppose that they would labour when under no necessity, is certainly ridiculous. It clearly appears to me, that if the poor could gather all their necessities from the next tree, without labour, they would never labour: He must have very little knowledge of human nature who supposes they would. If necessity then does not enforce labour, what can enforce it?

After all, it must be acknowledged that a good internal police, and a set of poor's laws well calculated and well executed, would have a very powerful effect: But *necessity* must still be the basis, or they will prove ineffectual.

I had proposed, my friend, to have sent you the outlines of a county workhouse scheme; but as I hear that the parliament have taken this important subject under their consideration, I doubt not but you will
soon

soon see a much more perfect and effectual plan, than I could ever spin out of my own brain. I therefore shall conclude this letter with a few remarks concerning the present price of wheat in this kingdom, and endeavour to shew, that the exportation of corn by bounty, must be of great advantage to every commercial state, and that the price limited by parliament, when this bounty shall be withheld, is such as can never distress industrious poor, or be a reason for raising the price of labour.

The judicious author of *the Vindication of Commerce and the Arts*, says, “ The admission of the exportation of grain, and
 “ the rendering it an object of commerce, is
 “ the best method which can be pursued to
 “ prevent scarcities from bad crops. If one
 “ third of the lands employed in tillage be
 “ cultivated for the use of foreigners, and
 “ at the same time one third of the crop
 “ should fail; by a prohibition of the ex-
 “ portation

“ portation of grain, the price would be
 “ kept down, and enough would be left for
 “ our own use and consumption, to be pur-
 “ chased on easy terms.”

The present great clamour about the high price of wheat and other provisions, appears to me to be very ill founded. The average price of wheat for twenty years past, is not above half what it was for twenty years together an hundred and twenty years ago*. In *France*, wheat is often at six times it's common price, their taxes much more burthen some than ours, and yet their labour is at about one third of the price of ours. Hence it appears, that the dearness of our manufactures at a foreign market is not owing to our high taxes, nor to our high price of provisions, but to some other causes, among which the sloth and luxury of our manufacturing populace is a very material one.

* See Pofflethwayte, article *Corn*.

Our fears about the poor's starving or quitting the kingdom in search of greater plenty, appear to be all chimerical and without foundation, and to be propagated by those who, I doubt, have other motives besides humanity for so talking

Provisions are certainly, at this time, cheaper in this kingdom than in any other country in *Europe*; that is, the relation between the value of necessaries and the value of a day's labour is such, that a man can purchase more necessaries and superfluities in *England* by eight hours labour, than he can in any other country in *Europe*. Or to make it yet clearer, a man can at this time purchase more necessaries in *England* with any given quantity of labour, than he can in *France* or *Holland*, or any trading state in *Europe*. What inducement then can our labouring people have for leaving their native country? None that I am acquainted with. But farther, the present high price of provisions would
have

have been thought moderate in the latter end of Queen *Elizabeth's* reign, and in that of *Charles* the First. Yet wages then were rather lower in general. Notwithstanding this, what a clamour is now made about it! This, probably, may be encouraged by gentlemen who have estates in *Ireland*, with design to encourage an importation of provisions from thence, to raise the value of their lands in that kingdom. But the *Spital-Fields* gentlemen are acting a part so contrary to their own interest in particular, and to the interest of trade in general, that unless they have some other views, besides the relief of the manufacturing poor, I can no way account for their behaviour. However, I cannot help believing that these melancholy representations of the distresses of their poor, who are said now to want employment, must be intended to strike the attention of the parliament, in order to gain from them a total prohibition of all foreign wrought silks.

However,

However, notwithstanding we are told, in the public papers, that near three thousand manufacturing people have been relieved by a late generous subscription; I am credibly informed that there are not fifteen hundred at this time totally unemployed; and that many of these might be employed if they would labour on moderate terms: But having been accustomed to get twenty or thirty shillings a week in the *gauze* manufactory, they will not return to other branches, even though, in some, hands are now wanted. I wish it was more generally believed, that to give a man a day's labour and a shilling for it, is better for the man, as well as for the community, than to give him the shilling as a charity.

I thank God that I have a heart which readily feels the distresses of my fellow creatures, and I rejoice in the relief of all proper objects; but our charities should be conducted by reason, for without this guide, we

may

may encourage sloth, idleness and debauchery, and do more harm than good. I fear I have tired you, and therefore will conclude with only adding, that I wish you and I may live to see a rational system of commerce established in this kingdom.

I am, Yours, &c.

P. S. All attempts to reduce the price of labour, whatever have been the price of provisions, have produced riots; and combinations have been formed all over the kingdom to support the old price, as they phrase it. Now if the manufacturing populace are resolved to continue a particular price, to what purpose should we desire to lower the price of provisions? Moral causes supersede natural, commercial and political; nay, if we believe divines, they frustrate the designs of deity.

T H E E N D .

